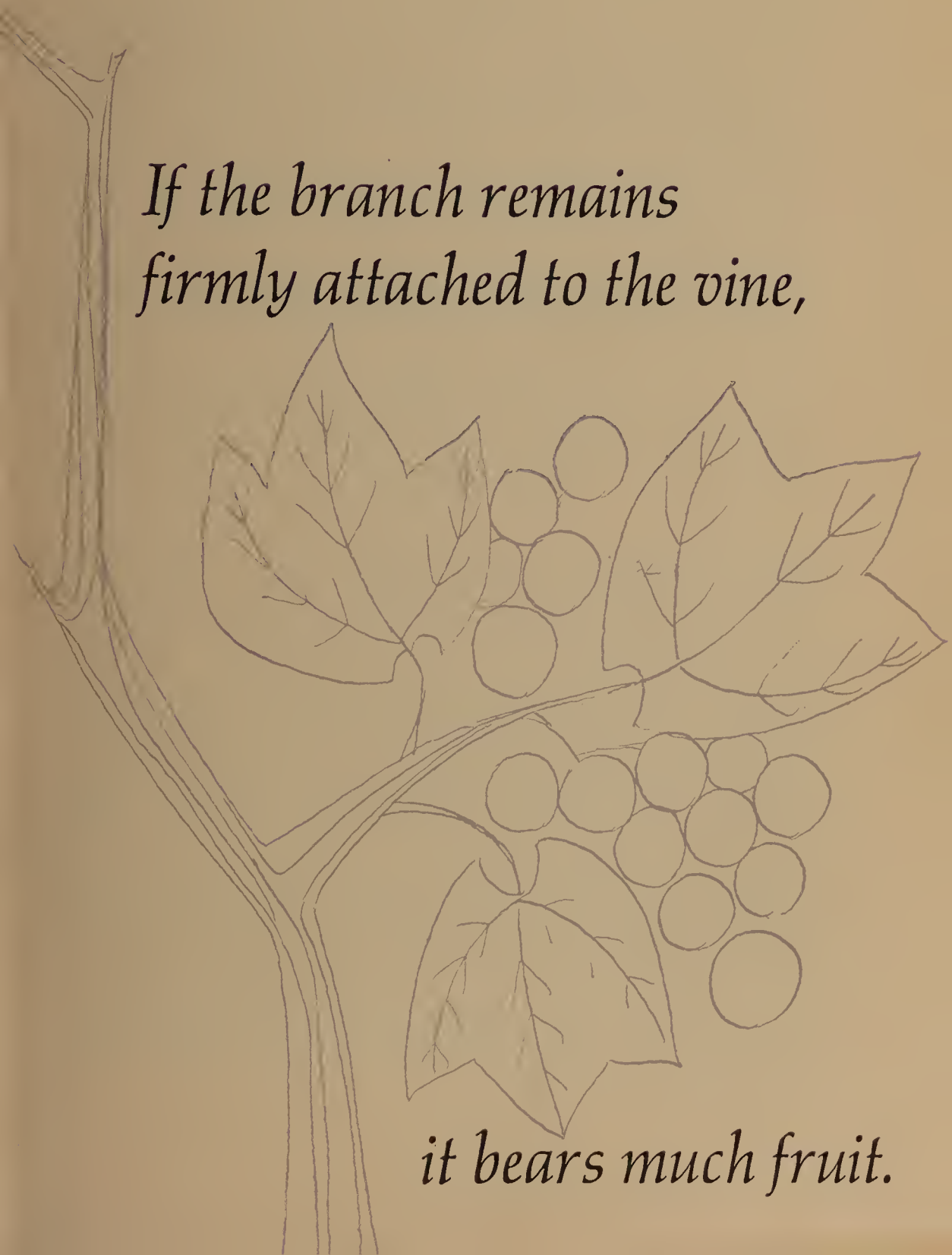
If the branch remains
firmly attached to the vine,



it bears much fruit.

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Cardinal Suenens and American Sisters

F. SYLVESTER MacNUTT, O.P.

Almost as soon as *The Nun in the World*[1] appeared in the book stores, it disappeared — sold out. At the NCEA convention in St. Louis, the Newman Press booth was caught short by a surprising demand for copies. Soon after, the whole printing was exhausted, and for several weeks Sisters thought themselves lucky to borrow a battered copy that had passed from hand to hand. Everywhere, Sisters were discussing Cardinal Suenens and his proposals.

In some communities unrest was built up when Sisters suddenly experienced a desire for apostolic action, but felt they were not living up to the Cardinal's ideal. Implementation of his ideas could only be carried out by authority and under obedience (as he himself clearly pointed out); yet the younger members of some communities were restless for action.

Some superiors who agreed with the Cardinal's apostolic suggestions made whatever adaptations they could. Others waited to watch and weigh the reactions of the majority of U.S. communities before making their own decisions.

Amidst the burst of favorable reviews there also appeared a few unfavorable notices, while the privately expressed opinions of Sister-superiors seemed to vary as widely as the reviews.

In general, the critics of *The Nun in the World* made two objections:

a) Cardinal Suenens' ideas are not practical;

b) He is speaking about European Sisters, not about Americans.

Now that surprise at his proposals has had time to dissipate, superiors are calmly considering whether the Suenens challenge applies to American Sisters. Still more concretely, they must wisely decide how the Cardinal's suggestions bear upon their own particular communities.

This article will try to point out the main questions raised by *The Nun in the World* for American Sisters — the questions that

[1] Newman Press: Westminster, 1962.

American communities will have to ask themselves and answer in the immediate future.

THE CARDINAL'S BASIC PREMISE

Before considering practical questions, we must first be clear about Cardinal Suenens' starting point, for once this has been agreed upon, most of his conclusions follow with inescapable logic. Moreover, some critics, failing to take issue with the Cardinal's basic premise, attack him on peripheral issues ("Obviously our nuns cannot hobble about in tight, kneelength skirts and slinky sweaters; nor would it be feasible to try chasing the elusive hemline from year to year"[2] — as if the Cardinal had suggested this!). This dodging of the main issue is perhaps unconscious, so it is important to emphasize the major assumption underlying *The Nun in the World.* It is simply this: *All Sisters* (excluding the strictly contemplative) *have an obligation to exercise the direct apostolate.*

This idea, once it is fully grasped, is a startling concept not only to Sisters but to clergy and laity as well. The Cardinal is saying that it is not enough for Sisters to exercise the apostolate of good example (indirect apostolate) but they must also exercise a real, personal, missionary apostolate among the people. This direct apostolate involves:

a) a *spoken,* doctrinal apostolate, so that Sisters can take an active part in spreading the faith, rather than merely being content to give good example as consecrated women carrying out their professional duties;

b) a *person to person* apostolate, requiring private, conversational contact in order to inspire, console and enlighten;

c) an *active seeking of contact* with women and girls, students and parents, patients and families, rather than waiting within the convent in hopes that stray individuals will knock on the door of their own accord.

In schools this would mean that Sisters should take a non-academic, personal interest in their students (without, of course, unduly interfering), so that they can turn out committed, apostolic women, whose entire lives are Christianized by the school. Unless

[2] "The Nun in the World," *Doctrine and Life,* September, 1963, p. 446.

Sisters can do more than teach individual courses, they cannot fully exercise the apostolate to which the Church today calls them.[3]

To get a complete understanding of what the Cardinal means by a "direct apostolate" we must read *The Gospel to Every Creature,*[4] for *The Nun in the World* is merely an expansion of Chapter V of the earlier and, perhaps, far more important book. Yet some reviewers of *The Nun in the World,* the sequel, seem unaware of *The Gospel to Every Creature,* and do not even bother to comment on the central thesis underlying both books (that all Christians have an obligation to exercise the direct apostolate).[5]

In any serious evaluation of the ideas contained in *The Nun in the World,* we must first read *The Gospel to Every Creature* and understand why the Cardinal says that every Christian (with the exception of the strict contemplative) has an obligation to exercise the direct apostolate. Jesus said, "Go, preach the Gospel," and this order leaves no room for evasion; it must be obeyed by all — not just bishops, not just priests, but by all religious — and by the laity as well.

In this book he is thus attacking the widely held view that the laity do their apostolic part simply by giving good example. Most laymen react with great surprise (and sometimes with disbelief) at first hearing that they have a serious obligation to be direct apostles; they have never heard of such an idea. So it is little wonder that some Sisters, too, are surprised to hear that they are especially included in the great command to preach the Gospel.

[3] Students themselves feel this need. As one girl wrote after an unfortunate school episode: "This tragedy prompts the question: could the Sisters have done something to prevent it? Now, I realize something most of my friends would be *surprised* to hear: that their teachers do have a strong personal interest in each of them. But most girls shrug their shoulders and think the teacher regards them only as a slot in the grade book and a locker number. As a result, the average student is content to keep school impersonal. Since most of us are unaware that our verb-conscious French teacher is concerned about more than memory, we back away from any contact in our after-school life."

[4] Newman Press: Westminster, 1957 (reprinted most recently in 1963).

[5] Symptomatic of the lack of attention paid to the more basic *The Gospel to Every Creature* is the footnote on p. 68 of *The Nun in the World* (first printing) in which the Cardinal's reference to his earlier work is given as "Cf. L'Eglise en état de mission." Apparently not even the editors of Newman Press recognized that this referred to *The Gospel to Every Creature,* which they themselves had published five years previously!

Despite the dynamite within its pages, however, *The Gospel to Every Creature* passed almost unnoticed into our libraries, even when it contained statements such as:

> Our duty as baptized Christians is as compelling for religious as for the laity and takes precedence over our professional duty. No one has the right to limit his obligations to the organizing of a hospital or school, and to confine his efforts to working for the success of his institution (p. 94).
>
> Why has one come to spend one's life in a particular spot, unless in the hope of spreading the Gospel message and acting as a radiant center of love? The specific end, the education of children or the care of the sick, is not the final objective, but a door of communication, ...the justification of our claim to be members of Christ.... This does not in any sense mean that one is bound to reserve for the final objective the same amount of time as for the specific end: a few hours given up to the organization of the laity may have incalculable repercussions....
>
> Religious should continually resist the temptation to restrict their mental vision... (p. 95).

Consequently, the first thing we must consider in evaluating Cardinal Suenens' proposals is the Gospel basis on which he builds: "Sisters, like all Christians, have a strict obligation to exercise a direct apostolate." Once it is granted that this obligation exists, then it follows that Sisters must act to fulfill their missionary vocation.

Incidentally, while some may not have noticed the first appearance of *The Gospel to Every Creature*, there was one who did: Pope Paul VI, then Cardinal Montini, who wrote the Preface and endorsed the Suenens' theme as follows:

> The theme of this book is so important that it cannot leave unaffected anyone who has at heart a love of the Church, or is conscious of the spiritual crisis in the world.... This is a disturbing and a courageous book, because it springs from a close observation of the existing weaknesses of the Christian community: but fundamentally it is an optimistic book.... With a clear vision and a vigorous style, the writer marshalls all his arguments to one conclusion, namely, the necessity, the possibility of that energy which, springing from love, can alone bring forth within the Church a new spirit of the mis-

sionary apostolate and thus save the world. This is a book to be read (p. viii).[6]

With the approval of the Pope, it then seems that the first question Cardinal Suenens proposes is:

"*Are all American communities of Sisters* (aside from the strictly contemplative) *fully aware that they have a strict obligation to exercise the direct apostolate* (as distinct from the apostolate of good example)?"[7]

QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE ANSWERED NOW

As reviewers have pointed out, one of Cardinal Suenens' basic proposals — that Sisters have a part in the formation of adult women in Catholic Action — depends upon the attitude and initiative of the bishop and priests of any given diocese. In many places, therefore, it is not immediately possible for Sisters to engage in Catholic Action.

Nevertheless, there are questions which communities can now ask themselves and can now act upon, once they realize the validity of the basic premise of *The Gospel to Every Creature.* These questions, posed by *The Nun in the World,* which are of immediate practical importance to American communities, can be directed to teaching communities and to nursing communities.

[6] Compare these statements with one criticism of *The Nun in the World:* "His words would have more force did they not convey the unfortunate impression of one living in an ivory tower, whose strictures are often unrealistic and sometimes unnecessarily severe.... His expression is often old-fashioned, at times obscuring his own meaning" (*Doctrine and Life,* September, 1963, pp. 448, 446). Might this not be the fault of the translator rather than the author?

[7] Père Motte, in his article in the February, 1964, issue of *Sponsa Regis,* would moderate Cardinal Suenens' thesis by taking the obligation of exercising a direct apostolate off the shoulders of the individual Sister and placing it instead upon the Sisters as a group. (He then admits that, as a group, the Sisters in France can do much more to spread and maintain the faith among the people.) Even if we accept Père Motte's thesis of group responsibility for the apostolate, all the following questions retain their full force, for they refer to an apostolate now at hand for American Sisters as a group. All the Sisters need is the *opportunity to converse* with students, parents, or patients. Many Sisters are not now qualified to conduct an apostolate of Catholic Action among adult women; but most teaching Sisters, for example, should be ready now to exercise a great influence on the spiritual lives of their students, if the Rule and schedule would only *give them the opportunity.*

QUESTIONS PROPOSED TO TEACHING COMMUNITIES

Once a teaching community sees that it has an obligation to exercise the direct apostolate, then it is clear that, within the context of the school situation, the Sisters are called to influence the entire lives of their students, out of school as well as in class. Moreover, this implies an apostolate to the parents and to the alumnae as well.

The following are the questions proposed by *The Nun in the World* to American teaching communities:

1) *"Is there any way of improving the Sisters' direct personal apostolate among their students?"*

Are Sisters in this community given the opportunity to talk to their students about non-academic matters outside of class? Does the Rule make it possible for Sisters to talk to girls who come to them with problems? If the Rule forbids such conversation or contact, then the Rule must be changed (Cf. ch. 8, "The Wider View"). Not only should the Rule make it possible for Sisters to exercise a direct apostolate among their students, but it should encourage such action. "One wants to give one's life, not to become a supervisor or a grammarian but to bring Christ to souls" (p. 88).

Is the schedule arranged to give time for the students to approach the Sisters outside of class, or, on the contrary, is the schedule so filled that it is physically impossible for the Sister to do anything but teach class and correct papers? Is the Sister encouraged, within the bounds of prudence, to have personal, non-academic contact with her students, so that the girls can talk to her privately if they wish?

Are the rules of enclosure so strict that the Sister cannot see a student except in the convent or in class? Can the Sister participate with the students in appropriate outside activities, when her presence would help and is desired by the students (e.g. the class picnic)?

These are questions posed to *American* teaching Sisters, not only by Cardinal Suenens, but by the girls themselves in some parochial schools who feel that their teachers are unapproachable, "out of it." As one girl wrote about the Sisters at her school: "They seem to be above everybody else, having no interests in

common with us. They seem to have been Sisters all their lives, never having shared the experiences we are now having."

Moreover, since direct contact with parents is necessary to solve many individual and social problems (dating and drinking, for example), the Sisters should have some kind of apostolate to their parents. Are teaching Sisters, then, encouraged to meet with parents for a mutual solving of student or school problems? Are Sisters allowed to visit homes where the family is relaxed and more ready to talk than in an office?

Furthermore, are Sisters encouraged to keep in touch with alumnae on a personal basis (as distinct from keeping in touch with alumnae only on a fund-raising and strictly institutional basis)? Are alumnae organized on a spiritual, apostolic basis, or merely in order to help support the school's finances?

These are pertinent, practical, and immediate questions that are addressed to Sisters all over the world — not just to those in Belgium.

Wherever the rules against visiting, the rules against going out at night, the rules against letter writing, the rules against contact with seculars seem to oppose the good of the apostolate, Cardinal Suenens advocates a re-examination of the rules. "To isolate the yeast from the dough for fear of contagion is to miss the whole point. By its very nature the apostolate implies a risk" (p. 124).

He advocates changing any customs or garb that reinforce in a modern girl's mind the impression that Sisters are out of touch, and quotes Pope Pius XII's Allocution of September 15, 1952 to Mothers General that warns them against certain "customs which, though they formerly had some meaning in a different cultural context, no longer have any and in which a young, fervent and courageous girl would find nothing but fetters inhibiting her vocation and her apostolate" (p. 133).

These, then, seem to be the basic questions with which *The Nun in the World* confronts American teaching communities.

QUESTIONS PROPOSED TO HOSPITAL COMMUNITIES

The direct apostolate for a nursing Sister consists mainly in her talking with patients to console them spiritually, and to help them see the meaning of suffering and death. The nurse can also

help the patient and his family solve the other questions that perplex a person when he is forced to lie in bed and think.

> A great many moral problems are confided to nuns who come to the sick with Christ in their hearts.
>
> Nuns know and feel that devotion and evangelization are not synonymous. Their unselfish devotion to the sick rouses everyone's admiration and often paves the way for more intimate contact, but devotion as such is not the apostolate... (pp. 90, 89).

Therefore, the primary question Cardinal Suenens would seem to ask of American nursing communities is:

"Is there any way of increasing the nursing Sisters' direct, apostolic contact with their patients?"

Are nursing administrators so tied up with desk work that they have no time for direct contact with patients or with the patients' families on a non-professional basis? "The danger of officialism is perhaps even greater for nursing nuns (than for teaching nuns), for medical care does not produce the same directly apostolic opportunities as teaching does" (p. 89).

Do nursing Sisters in the wards have time to visit their patients, or is their schedule so crowded that there is no time to spend talking with the sick? Are the Sisters' hours so long that they are too tired to visit the sick after their working hours are over? (In some hospitals the Sisters fall asleep during Mass from sheer exhaustion.)

The Cardinal also advocates keeping in touch with ex-patients and, in addition, exercising an apostolate to the families of patients; yet the basic problem is whether nursing Sisters have adequate time to talk to their patients. Do they have a chance to heal souls as well as bodies?

CONCLUSION

In summation, it seems that Cardinal Suenens very definitely has something to say to American Sisters. The main questions proposed by his writings are:

1) Are American Sisters fully aware that they have a strict obligation to exercise the direct apostolate?

2) Is there any way of improving the teaching Sisters' direct apostolate among their students, alumnae, and parents?

3) Is there any way of increasing the nursing Sisters' direct, apostolic contact with their patients?

These, it seems, are practical questions that should be investigated immediately. Ultimately, only Sister-superiors can give appropriate answers to these questions raised by the Cardinal. But, confident of their wise and prudent resolution of the apostolic problem he predicts:

> The consequences of this change in religious customs would be incalculable, not only for the world outside the convent, but for the nuns themselves, who would be the first to benefit by it.
>
> This apostolic fervor would give to daily action a new range and a supernatural character even more marked than before.... That sense too common among them of being... enclosed in a sealed-off world, will disappear like a mist in the bright sunshine of radiant spiritual charity through which they will be "all things to all men," and will feel themselves, in the words of Saint Paul, to owe a debt to their brothers in the world.... The very consciousness of having the responsibility to guide others will here as everywhere work marvels of transformation.... We must believe in the power of humble and little ones in the Kingdom of God. Let us beware of hesitation.[8]

[8] *The Gospel to Every Creature,* pp. 108-109 passim.

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A Permanent School of Fraternal Charity

GERARD HUYGHE

"Carry each other's burdens and thus you will accomplish the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Fraternal charity is an asceticism of the religious life, a source of affective and psychological equilibrium, the cement of peace in communities, and a condition of the witness that consecrated souls are called upon to give in the paganized world where they carry on their apostolate.

Charity does not reign easily in all religious communities. Common life is a harsh trial for the sensitive — harder on women than on men. Woman's psychological epidermis (if we dare call it so) is more fragile; consequently, little things, unnoticed by men, are remarked by the more intuitive woman and she suffers greatly as a result. Women are not only more capable of suffering but also of causing suffering. All this is human, humiliating, and often painful. But if one is not careful, the entire psychological consciousness is invaded by little problems which are often false problems except for the one who suffers. Let us add to the above that religious life is much more confining for women than for men. Their duties give them only limited and conditional autonomy. Their dependence on superiors is complete. They live so closely that they grate on one another. Once a wound has been inflicted it never gets a chance to grow a scab. On the contrary new irritations come to infect old wounds. It has been said that the Church is audacious to have women live together. That is true. And if we do encounter women who live in happy communities we meet others who suffer from their Sisters or make them suffer. This problem is more serious than one would think. Undoubtedly it is one cause for a lack of vocations, as the young (students or co-workers) are aware of the lack of charity in the religious guiding them. This is aggravated when the young are made the recipients of tales of uncharitableness, real or fancied. But where there is true charity vocations flourish. Fraternal charity is a sign of an authentic consecration to the Lord, but the inverse is also true.

The formation in charity given in the novitiate is insufficient. In later years these same religious are exhorted by their superiors and retreat masters — exhortations which are often more moralizing. On the whole there is a lack of co-ordination. There is lacking especially the conviction that fraternal charity ought to be drawn out, during the entire religious life, by the patient labor of those who have authority in the name of the Church. Fraternal charity is often treated as a virtue. It is more than a virtue — it is the entire religious life. It is, in effect, an asceticism embracing the totality of religious existence in the sense that it can live and grow only at the cost of an implacable stripping of the instinctive egotism at our very core. This stripping, a very death through humility, is a necessary condition for the growth of fraternal charity. Those who are not alive to the necessity of growing unceasingly in fraternal charity ought to wonder and be uneasy, for they are asleep.

It is not necessary to point out that sins against charity can be serious, even mortal. Fraternal charity will be the major criterion at the last judgment. "As long as you have done it to the least of my brethren you have done it to me." But the capital importance of fraternal charity is lost on Christians. This is evident in the way they make their examination of conscience and their confessions. At the last judgment we can say, "We did not know." But—"He who says that he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in the darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and for him there is no stumbling. But he who hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and he does not know whither he goes, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (I John 2:9-11).

We have said that a long education is necessary. The first steps are within our power — to love our neighbor as ourselves; but the goal — to love our neighbor as Jesus loves him — is beyond our human power. We discover that the growth of Christian charity is the work of grace and depends on the intensity of the love of God dwelling in us. But it also depends on the humble effort of people, especially superiors and novice mistresses, who have charge of the formation of their Sisters. They are not without help in this task — they have the Gospel. Leafing through it let us outline together the steps in an education in fraternal charity.

Christ educated his Apostles and as time went on he became more exacting, in the sense that the motives upon which he founded fraternal charity became higher and higher. Let us consider the steps toward fraternal charity.

I. Jesus takes his disciples at the point to which the Old Testament had led them and he tells them to love one another as they love themselves.

In answer to the questions of the Scribe Christ said: "Thou shalt love the Lord with thy whole heart, . . . and thy neighbor as thyself." Here the two commandments are so closely linked that when only the first was asked for, Jesus gave them both. Though the answer was given to the Scribe it was nevertheless destined for his disciples as part of their education. There will never be true fraternal charity without love of God. Nor will there be true love of God that is not expressed in love of neighbor. Do not minimize this "as thyself." Modern psychology sees the need for a healthy love of self so that our affective life will develop fully, capable of freely accepting and receiving others. Jesus gives the same teaching when he says, "Whatsoever you wish men to do to you, even so do you also to them" (Mt. 7:12).

II. The degree of humility and the obstacle of pride.

Christians, especially those consecrated to Christ, often take as their inspiration the words of Christ, "As often as you do it to the least of my little ones, you have done it to me" (Mt. 24:40). Rightly, they establish their fraternal charity on their faith, which enables them to discover in others the mysterious presence of Jesus. But they are astonished that they do not make more progress on this path. Either they are trying to go too fast or perhaps they pass over psychological and spiritual realities and neglect humility.

A. HUMILITY BEFORE GOD

On this point Jesus gives a constant lesson. Often he points it up by two almost stylized characters: the Pharisee and the Publican, the worker of the first hour and that of the eleventh, the older son and the prodigal, Simon and the sinful woman. In each case one is full of virtue; he is sure of his value. Objectively, he seems to be right. But — he stands up straight before God.

He treats God as an equal. He can only point a finger at the other to condemn him. "I am not like this publican." "When this thy son..." "These last have worked only one hour." In the case of each of the others there is no envy, no temptation to point a finger. His heart is too full of the awareness of his misery. What profound lesson is there in this constant opposition between two such different characters? There is no way of practicing true fraternal charity if one has not beforehand profoundly humiliated himself before God in the consciousness of his misery. Often Christians (and even consecrated ones) indulge in flagrant violations of charity by rash judgments and condemnations. They carry about within themselves a tribunal where they judge and condemn by applying a law which is no other than the tranquil conviction of their own virtue and worthiness before God. Occasionally they become aware of this and turn over a new leaf, but only too quickly fall into their former faults. There is no end of this for them. They will never arrive at an indulgent judgment as long as they keep their pharasaical mentality. But let them fall to the dust before the face of God — their hearts will be renewed and will become capable of love. Once more we see that at every stage of fraternal charity we encounter God. It is the authentic attitude of the sinner conscious of his true misery before God.

This is what must be taught in the novitiate and at every level of the religious life. Fraternal charity is more than a virtue — it is the entire Christian life. It is beyond the realm of good resolutions. It presupposes that one *knows* God, that one has a keen sense of his grandeur, his power, his glory, and that like Isaias or Job one has a keen awareness of his own misery and that he needs to do penance in sackcloth and ashes. Thus anyone aware of his own sin dare not condemn another.

B. HUMILITY TOWARD OTHERS

This must also be cultivated in the novitiate. We find the great model in Jesus. Before creating the Sacrament of this charity, before establishing his Church, Jesus knelt and washed the feet of his apostles. It is true that pride is the greatest obstacle to humility and we must die to pride in order to live with love for others. It is only a means in view of an end, love. Do not say

that humiliations come often enough, unasked for. Humility should be a reflection of Christ, "meek and humble of heart." To be able to grow in fraternal charity it is necessary to rid oneself of pride, and to die to pride it is necessary to live in thought at the feet of others. This is the means to attain charity; it is also the means to create unity in the community, the condition of a disinterested apostolate, and finally the only way to exercise authority in the Church.

III. All embracing charity and the obstacle of exclusiveness.

What kills fraternal charity is the choice of one over another; the elimination of a person, or a category of persons, from the circle of love. Nothing is more contrary to the teaching of Jesus. Let us try to summarize it to give back to it its first intensity:

A. Jesus admits of no exception; fraternal charity *must* be universal, for all are children of God. It is to such a perfection of love which omits no one that Jesus invites us when he says: "You are to be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect."

B. We must love the most neglected, the poor, the hungry, the naked, etc. In their modern counterparts we have only to open our eyes to see them. Jesus sums it up in that admirable expression "the least of my brethren."

C. We must also love the ill-disposed. Common life reveals them clearly and their presence gives vigilant educators the opportunity to conduct religious souls along the path of a vigorous asceticism without danger. To love friends is easy and within the power of pagans. But it is necessary to love one's enemies. Jesus enumerates them: those who hate, those who curse, those who strike, those who despoil, who seek quarrels, etc. Luke 6:27-30, and Mt. 5:22-24, 40 have special value. For the word of Jesus has a terrible urgency and we must weigh each word. "When you present your gift at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you..." It is not a question of *your* anger against your brother but "he has something against you..." How often are two Sisters in the same community kept from Communion by some misunderstanding? If they but understood the sacred character of fraternal charity and its close link with the sacrifice of the Mass, daily Communion would be a nourishment of charity and an urgent demand for reconciliation. A heart in which fraternal

charity does not reign totally is not an abode for the Body of Christ, but a prison.

IV. The stage of real fraternal charity according to Jesus.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU. It is well to dwell upon these words, for they are so familiar that we have ceased to understand them. Saint Therese, three months before her death, wrote that God had finally given her the grace to understand their meaning. She had put her attention upon loving God but then understood that to do his will she had to love her fellow man. At the last supper Christ said, "A new commandment I give unto you, Love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples." Surely, continues Saint Therese, it was not the natural qualities of his disciples that Christ loved; there was between him and them an infinite distance. He was eternal wisdom; they were ignorant fishermen, rough, filled with earthly thoughts and ambitions. Still Jesus called them his friends, his brothers. He wishes to see them reign with him in the kingdom of his Father, and to open his kingdom to them he chooses to die on a cross. "For," said he, "greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his friend." "Meditating on these words," said Saint Therese, "I understand how imperfect was my love for my Sisters. I saw that I did not love them as God loved them. I understand now that perfect charity consists in supporting the faults of others, in not being surprised by their weakness, in being edified by their littlest act of virtue. But above all I understood that charity should not remain closed in one's heart. 'Neither do men light a lamp and put it under the measure, but upon the lampstand, so as to give light to all in the house' (Matt. 5:15). I believe that this candle represents charity which ought to illumine, rejoice, not only those who are the most dear to me but all those who are in the house, without excluding anyone."

A. How has Jesus loved us? He loved us *first.* He loved his apostles not because they were good but because *he* was good. And thus he sanctified them; he healed them and saved them. Love created goodness in his apostles as he creates it in us. We must understand and take seriously the love of Jesus for us, its realism. He loves his Apostles as they are and he loves us as we are. We find it impossible to love those who are not lovable.

However, our conscience bothers us but we try to escape judgment by attitudes which are falsely supernatural; we pretend to see Christ in the person of others provided this act of faith dispenses us from seeing them and accepting them in their unattractiveness. Now Jesus loved his Apostles and us with realism. This love is a love which we must always imitate, otherwise what we call fraternal charity will never be anything but hypocrisy. We ought to love our enemies not because they are our enemies but that they might be so no longer, just as merciful love pours over us, sinners, to heal us of our sin.

B. Jesus loved unto the end, i.e., to the *extreme* of love. In the heart of a Christian, love is truly love only if it goes to the extreme of the daily gift of oneself as Christ gave himself for us. Let us be concrete — how can we experience and exercise a love which goes to such an extreme? It is first not an exercise but a state. Gestures of charity are nothing if they are not inspired by a permanent disposition of love. When a mother watches an entire night over a sick child she thinks nothing of it. She is a mother. Thus should all supernatural, fraternal charity be. In a religious community there is a superior and Sisters. The relations which exist among them in virtue of the duties carried out are not essential. It is the relations of communion which are essential. They are all, in fact, daughters of the same Father. The relations of functions are transitory; they depend on nominations which change, whereas relations of communion are definitive, linked by a common Baptism renewed at the same religious profession. A superior can have with her religious only passing relations which last no longer than the duty involved. But she should have with them relations of communion which make of her the sister of all in Jesus. These relations are definitive and ought to penetrate every gesture of her community life. She ought to love as she lives, as she breathes, and that day after day until her death. This should be true of every religious and it is an ideal to be sought the entire lifetime of each one. It is here that we experience the bond between an affective maturity and true fraternal charity. We shall speak later of the formation of the spirit of faith in the midst of the difficulties and sufferings of everyday existence, but we can speak here of how spiritual lives are broken and bruised under the blows of

common life. Religious entered the novitiate in order to love God and to love others, certainly, but also (more or less consciously) to be loved, to be "understood." And thus there proliferate all the possible deviations of an affectivity which has remained at an adolescent stage: passionate attachment to a superior, who substitutes for a mother whose "little girl" the Sister always remains; particular friendship for a Sister who serves as a confidant and a repository of a heart full of its own problems; hardness toward those who have caused grief, or who simply stayed in their corner. From the novitiate on, it is necessary to teach the candidates for religious life that love seeks to give itself without waiting for the initiative of the other. It is necessary to teach them that love is a gift to others, and that it is such a gift or state that it receives only in the measure that it gives without being aware of giving. The perfection of fraternal charity can be attained by a consecrated soul only if, in the midst of her own poignant suffering, she can forget self and go out to others in suffering, especially if among these she finds the cause and source of her own anguish. But such a love cannot be understood, pursued and attained except by the gift of a special grace accorded to insistent prayer. We realize that fraternal charity engages the entire spiritual life and realizes the unity of the mystical life. It is an authentic and sure way of contemplation. It is necessary to pray much and to lead a life of contemplation to be capable of understanding and exercising fraternal charity. It is in the intimate union with the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit that the religious soul discovers that there is only one love, that which binds one to God and which overflows continually upon others.

We understand, then, that fraternal charity ought to be affectionate and tender and should not be without overtones of sentiment. Certainly there are risks of deviations in this domain, but can one develop a true Christian and religious education without risks? One can moreover show affection without giving marks of affection, and one is much more sure of his balance in loving the whole world with his heart than in putting oneself on guard and restraining oneself. Thus the Lord was affectionate with his disciples, calling them his little children, his friends, his brothers. Human beings have greater need of affection than of bread, and

even in religious communities there are those who die from lack of love. This love of affection, which is not inspired by sensibility but by the love of the Lord which burns in one's heart, brings with it moreover its continual purification, for often it is not returned.

V. The stage of discovering Jesus in the person of others.

"In so far as you have done it to the least of my brethren you have done it to me." Christ does not say, "It is as though you did it to me"; but, "You have done it to me." Fraternal charity has a quasi-sacramental force, for it renders Christ present. The others are not a reflection of Christ; they are Christ for those who live by faith. The one who lives by faith will easily find the face of Christ in the face of his brother, and at the same time the sight of his brother will nourish his faith. It will become insupportable, impossible for him to exclude anyone from his love, or even to keep him at a distance. How could he adore Christ in the Eucharist if he did not venerate him in everyone whom he meets?

Let us make a comparison. We place our fellow-men around our heart in concentric circles, some very near, others very far. If we accept this disposition of our brothers at different distances from our heart, we can affirm that the Lord is as far from our heart as the brother we hold the farthest off. And if we exclude someone from our love, we have eliminated Christ. Kierkegaard says, "The love of God and love of neighbor are two doors that one can only open or close at the same time."

VI. The stage of permanent dwelling in love.

"Remain in my love." From the heart of the Father flows a fountain of living water, the fountain of love which fills the heart of the Son. From the heart of Christ this water flows to the heart of each Christian. And Christian that I am, I am invited to plunge into this living water, to wash in it, to live in it permanently. From my heart, finally, this flow of love should spread to each of those confided to us by God. Woe to us if for an instant we interrupt this overflow of love pouring from the heart of God. How could we pretend to enter into dialogue with God if we break off the dialogue with one of our brothers? We can say to each of those with whom we live that we have need of him to realize God's plan in us and for us. We must also add that in fraternal charity there

must never be the shadow of condescension, a trace of superiority, never an intention of a "do gooder."

VII. Finally, it is in the Eucharist that we receive the daily nourishment of fraternal charity.

Every day in the course of a religious life the education of fraternal charity is nourished by participation in the holy sacrifice of the Mass and by Communion. We have already said that the preparation for Communion absolutely exacts the profound reconciliation of divided hearts. The solemn moment of reception of Christ is not the moment to indulge in petty biases. It is a temptation to believe we love God above all and at the same time refuse to love our brothers. God does not bother us; we can have the illusion of loving him. Our neighbor, on the other hand, does bother us in the sense that he is always there before us with his faults and failings. Now it is he whom we must love in order to say to God, "I love you." It is with our neighbor that we must communicate in order to communicate with God. It was intentional that Christ promulgated the commandment of fraternal charity at the very moment in which he instituted the Blessed Sacrament. The baptized person is invited to sit successively at three tables and at each to take food.

First, at the table of fraternal repasts, the table of men, the table of sinners. Here Jesus often sat. Here charity founded on humility ought to express itself simply in the life of the community. At this table ordinary bread is eaten — the bread which the child asks of his father with confidence, the bread which the child asks of his heavenly father, the bread which Jesus shared with his Apostles. There is also the table of the paschal repast, prepared beforehand, before which Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and at which he promulgated the commandment of love. At this table he took bread, blessed it, transformed it into his Body and gave it to his disciples to eat. Each day the paschal meal is served anew. Mass is not first a renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross; it is first of all the renewal of Holy Thursday. The altar is the banquet table to which Jesus invites us. "The bread which I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:51). The third table is that of heaven. The simple bread of the first table becomes the Body of Christ at the second table and here at the third is

eternal life. "He who eats my flesh has eternal life and I shall raise him up on the last day" (John 6:54). Each table is a figure of the following one. Each bread given in nourishment is a sign of what is to come, and the eucharistic table especially is the promise and the pledge of what we have expected.

We have said much about fraternal charity and how it should be developed during the entire religious life. It is the authentic sign of a vocation. It is moreover the grave duty of all those who have authority in the name of the Church to watch over its development. Let us add that it is also the necessary condition for all evangelization. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you have love one for another" (John 13:35). Love has such importance that there is no religious life or apostolate without its continuous growth and fulfillment. In all congregations it is necessary to pray unceasingly that religious grow continually in fraternal charity. It would be a great grace if in every community there would be one or several who would make this charity the center of their mystical life. Perhaps without being aware of it they would act as a leaven of love, which after raising the degree of charity in their own religious family would then spread the authentic ferment of Christ into the world in which they live.

In this world there are two parts: love on one side and everything else on the other. One can lose everything else; in fact one gives it up easily. But one cannot give up love without dying. He who has begun to understand this is already living in the light and has begun his eternity.

The Call to Supernatural Life

ROBERT GUELLUY

In virtue of our faith, we explain to ourselves the existence of the entire universe by a love, by an affection, by a gratuity. We are optimistic enough to see behind all things "Someone." We believe that the profound *raison d'etre* of our existence and of our vocation is found in the love of a God who needed to be our Father.

Meditation on the doctrine of creation leads us to consider that of which creation was the beginning: our vocation to the supernatural life. Creation, in fact, makes up part of the world's vocation to live with the divine life, and our own vocation is included in the call to live with and for God, by a theological adherence in the present life and by immediate vision in eternity.

Our vocation is to praise God, to be enchanted with what he is, to have for him the soul of an adoring, enraptured, wondering child. If God has called us, it is not that we might render him service; it is for the joy of having his children around him. It is for the joy of seeing us live with him in a family. This is the real purpose of our religious vocation. God has called us less for the service we can render him than for the dialog established with him in faith, hope, and charity.

God has created us in order that we might consent to receive — in order that we might live in receiving ourselves. He initiated us into his own life so that we might live in intimacy, in a "yes," in a *fiat* which is the echo of our Lady's and even the echo of the eternal "yes" which is the Son of the Trinity.

God has made us so that, being poor, we might be open to his grace. He has made us to receive gifts of which we could not be the author, to acquire a sanctity that we could not produce, but which must be accepted with the soul of a grateful child, with the heart of an enriched poor man. God has so made us that in our very condition of being human he sees in us the reflection of the Lord Jesus. He has designed us so that we might be the choice terrain on which his grace will operate, that he might do great

things in us. Responding to this realization, we must go forward with humility and thanksgiving.

We can give God only his own gifts, somewhat like children who give a present to their parents with money coming from the parents themselves. Children are incapable of providing for themselves; they cannot earn through their own efforts. The great joy of the parents is to see them, in filial confidence, receiving all from the parents themselves. A mother and father are not happy if their children draw back, pretend independence, and refuse their gifts.

Our vocation, then, is that of children who will agree to receive everything; to accept what disconcerts and what delights, what pleases and what displeases, with equal confidence, sure of the God who leads them. Our vocation is thus a dynamic passivity in which we receive actively from God what he puts into our hands in order to return it to him. This is the whole program of our Christian life. God has created us so that we might partake of his goodness and receive from his love not only exterior goods but even interior ones: a share in his own life, a participation in that which he is.

What constitutes our prime value we have not produced ourselves, nor have we in any way merited it. We are not the source of our sanctifying grace nor the artisans of our Baptism. Each of us is empowered to baptize others, but we cannot baptize ourselves! We share in the life of the Church by grace; God has called us there by mercy. We are not the ones who instituted Baptism, nor do we approach the sacrament on our own initiative.

In all this we are receiving, dependent. We must live like the poor — objects of benevolence, devoid of personal resources, living solely on gifts. What is of primary importance in us — the life of grace, the indwelling of the Spirit of holiness, the participation in the life of the Trinity — has been given to us. Even the meritorious acts which we can posit by means of this sanctifying grace are initiated in us by the Holy Spirit. It is God who causes them to well up within us. It is he who awakens in us the best of ourselves by putting into us an echo of the beating of his own heart. Sanctifying grace, our greatest treasure, is a gift. We may not have a spirit of proprietorship over it, or look upon it with

vain complacency. Rather must we go to the Lord with an awed thanksgiving because of all that we have received for nothing.

When one makes a good confession, or has been to Mass twice rather than once, there is sometimes an inclination to be satisfied with self. One has the feeling of having done something for God. That of course is true, because God is so good that he does not give us holiness ready-made, but lets us make it with him. He wants sanctity to be the fruit of our collaboration with him; he pushes his delicacy that far. Nevertheless, instead of our doing something for him, it is clearly he who has done something for us. And of that we think much too little!

We ought to come away from the confessional marveling at divine grace, our souls filled with praise. A certain satisfaction — "I have overcome my repugnance" — is justified, but it borders on the superfluous. The essential thing is what God has done for us.

As with sanctifying grace and the sacraments, so it is with our life of faith also, our life of welcome to God. Our own powers and strength are wholly inadequate. It is his grace alone which permits us to be open to him and to offer ourselves to him. Our *suscipe* really means "take" — he must indeed take all from our hands for we can never raise them to him by our own powers.

In order to understand this, let us consider what happens when one human being places faith in another, when a man shows a true appreciation for another. The experience is always twofold. In pledging faith and in giving respect, one at the same time receives. We can believe someone only because he is credible; we can respect another only because he is respectable. In reality, the one whom we believe and the one whom we revere has awakened in our soul this laudable response. He has allowed us to be more ourselves, and he has given us the opportunity to be so more nobly. Whoever loves another is a debtor to this other even in his very affection, since that affection has not come solely from his own heart but is the fruit of an encounter springing from mutual contact.

It is the same with God. We can believe him and love him only because his own personality draws us, because his divine "sympathy" attracts us, awakening in us faith and charity. Divine

"sympathy" is simply grace. We can produce an act of acceptance only by this sympathy of God invading us, only by his grace transforming us.

Our whole Christian life is based on that faith which God has brought to birth in us. The twelve Apostles gave their faith to the Master, and they can rightly be said to have done something. But they had to acknowledge that above all it was his work in them. Thus faith must be filled with gratitude. What resignation this implies, what fundamental renouncement, what radical liberation! The maximum deliverance which human love achieves is in marriage, when one consents to live with another and to need him. In the same measure as there is gift of self to the other, pride is conquered and the spirit freed. But that which is realized as healthy purification in marriage is only very limited and partial, because the dependence in regard to the other is not radical. One never owes to the other all that one is — one's existence, intelligence, vocation, etc.

But God invites us to the greatest possible liberation from self, to the renouncement of any least spirit of proprietorship. He looks for a spirit of welcome in us, of humble dependence, of active passivity. He is not interested in seeing us use one fault to overcome another. What concerns him in the souls of believers is what is done, not through pride, but through love reaching out to him. In reality, God awaits from us not only what we do *for* him, but also *by* him and *in* him. He ardently desires that we love him with his own love that he has put in us. He yearns that all our life be inspired by the spirit of faith. What interests God is my victory over my laziness, inspired by the conviction that fidelity to his grace and docility to his Spirit require me to overcome my laziness.

What interests God is that I live knowing myself loved, and that my whole conduct be inspired by this belief in his love. What interests God is that I live as a reconciled sinner; that I live by the mystery of redemption, following our Lord Jesus Christ. This matters much more than not being impatient or not being discouraged. What interests God is that I continue to go forward by passing through my defects and my weaknesses. He does not ask me to succeed, but only to try. He does not ask me never to fall,

but only never to stop calling out after him, sure of his grace and his heart. What interests God is the whole effort which is my faith, my faith prolonged in my life. What interests God is my prayer translated into action.

That is our vocation: the call to live in this way, believing irrevocably in Love. This is what it means to live theologically; it is to manifest to the world who God is; it is to witness to his heart.

We have professed that God suffices to fill our existence, that his love is sufficient to fill our lives. The problem of fidelity to our vocation is the problem of fidelity to this spirit of faith. So often we fail in our trust, being disappointed in this and unhappy in that, irritated for one reason and discouraged for another, seeking self-satisfaction here and self-complacency there. In truth, God asks us, if we believe sincerely in his love, to take seriously the sufficiency of that love. If we believe in his love, we must proclaim that he really does suffice for us.

This attitude implies, for example, a lack of indignation if someone takes my accustomed place, if another uses my things, if someone appropriates my ideas as his own. These petty things in which we seek ourselves from morning till night are the contrary of what the prayer of the Mass — "It is truly meet and just" — demands of us. Fidelity to this faith requires nothing less than holy indifference, even in regard to our efforts for perfection. If we feverishly try to do our best, if we set out ruthlessly to realize some good goal, it is obvious that we are seeking ourselves rather than the Lord. We must be detached from all, even from doing good. In the depths of our souls we do not have the courage to go to God simply, being absolutely sure of him, because we feel that our past is not without reproach and that we are not great saints. We lack faith in his love and we do not have holy indifference in regard to our defects; yet this is essential if the defects are to be corrected. Neither do we have holy indifference in regard to our virtues. Like everyone else we cling to our own ideas when the important thing is to cling to God, spending oneself there in a spirit of docility and thanksgiving. Often our efforts are enshrined in a spirit of proud determination, and that is quite another thing!

We lack audacity in spiritual ways and we are wanting in effort because our faith in love is deficient. Try to take seriously this divine affection and still live nonchalantly, without making effort! We understand God so poorly. We know him in words and formulas, yes, but our personality is not involved in this abstract knowledge. So we keep a divided soul. We think a little about what he is — very superficially, with only the surface of our spirit engaged — but we are afraid to admit, in the depths of our intelligence and with our whole heart, what he really is.

It is enlightening to advert to the opening prayer of the Divine Office: "O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me." Lord, come to me; I am totally incapable of going to you. Come to me so that I may praise you; I cannot do so without you. This first cry is an avowal of indigence from one who is going toward the God of all goodness in a spirit of faith. Lord, come to my aid. We are invited to utter this prayer with confidence, knowing that it will not remain sterile, certain that it is God himself who has aroused it within us and puts it on our lips. We are absolutely incapable of praying unless the Holy Spirit prays in us; we can pray only in a disposition of welcome. It is impossible for us to make an act of faith, an act of union *(sympathie)*, without accepting and corresponding to a movement which does not originate in us.

"O God, come to my assistance." But first we must dethrone our self-sufficiency and renounce the soul of a proprietor. Behold me here in my nakedness, in my powerlessness to pray. I used to look on others condescendingly; I valued my own good ideas; I held tightly to my opinions and to many other things. But I am not able to stammer a prayer without your grace; all that I have, I have received. What was worthwhile in my ideas came from your goodness. I acknowledge my nothingness; I renew my religious spirit. I have lived before in a pagan heroism, in an earthly generosity, in a devotion inspired by the wisdom of this world. Behold me, Lord, in a state of conversion. I come to you in gratitude, proclaiming that I owe you everything, recognizing my total dependence. This is a relaxing prayer, a liberating prayer.

There follows immediately the *Gloria Patri*, which repeats the meaning of our religious life, the meaning of our vocation. God

has called you in order to hear from you those words which give him such joy. A moment earlier we were affirming our wretchedness; but now we are turned toward him and concerned with his praise. We tell him again how satisfied we are with him. We dare to say — without utilitarian ends, but simply for the joy of what God loves to hear — "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit." For these words he has created us and called us. We cannot even utter them without his grace. They must indeed spring from a soul purified of the simply natural. We must pray them in docility to the Holy Spirit, with purity of intention, simply because the Lord is worthy of them.

Things would move along so much better if we would say more sincerely, and with a less unbending soul, "Glory be to the Father. . . ." Go beyond all your misery, go to God with empty hands, content that he be your fulness and fulfillment.

Do not be deceived by this kind of spirituality. This active passivity is far from being a gratifying lethargy. It is not a question of "giving up" or "letting go." *Nothing is more demanding than being loved.* We must consent to be loved and to be powerless except in this love. We must shake off our independence and our attachment to self in order to put on holy indifference, which is simply the reverse side of authentic love. Nothing but his love can claim us. This holy indifference is the criterion of the sincerity of our faith. It is not to be sought for itself — one is to seek God only — but it will be a sign of the authenticity of our search. *Holy* indifference is not merely indifference, a facile solution consisting in not being bothered. It is a virtue, a power — not laziness. There is holy indifference just as there is holy indignation. Holy indignation is not easy either. Plain indignation we know, and are quite capable of it without great effort! But holy indignation in the name of "It is truly meet and just" supposes much love. So does holy indifference.

We must learn again to say, "Our Father," and to pray, "Glory be to the Father." We must study to become the poor whom God fills; to accept, in our indigence, being loved by God who transforms us in our innermost being.

The dream of God is not to see us with new riches; it is to see us his children. Even if we are difficult children, he is happy

to have us and to see us cry out to him in all earnestness, "Father!" It is perhaps too late to become perfect — our heredity is there, our past and the weight of our habits — but there is still time to be his children. There is still time to be the prodigal son, to go with a humble heart to the God of mercy.

IN A STRUTTING PARADE

The bench jeweler's eyes bulged
with jealousy and wonder.
On the park sidewalk
in a strutting parade,
amethysts shone in the sun.
Soft feather facets of pigeons
caught a sun's ray
(or God knows — star beams in daylight)
and jewels tiptoed
among popcorn and bread
oblivious of unstrained art upon them.

SISTER MARY ROBERTA, D.D.R.

Book Reviews

PRAYER IN OTHER WORDS. By Hubert van Zeller. Templegate, Springfield, Illinois, 1963. Pp. 94. Cloth, $2.95.

"Our Lord teaches us to feel at home with God. We are his children and he loves us. That is the first thing to grasp if we are to pray to him" (p. 35). This passage is typical of the good sense found in this slim volume. It is subtitled "A Presentation for Beginners" and so it is, but its simple and serene wisdom would also be a balm to many a person grown old (and perhaps weary) in the life of prayer. The author starts with the premise that "prayer comes from God, is kept going by God, and finds its way back to God by its own power" (p. 13). No quietism here; he immediately demands that we give ourselves generously to this process and place no obstacles in the way. It is a service which we ourselves must give; "Nobody else can give it instead of you: it is yours alone to be given to him alone" (p. 15).

The jacket says this book teaches us "the nature and methods of prayer." Don't look for "methods" in terms of points, formulae or necessary progressions. If there be method it takes the form of sane and happy meditations on gospel truths and the example of Christ. He calls prayer God's revelation of himself which asks us to open ourselves to him in return. "Every time you pray, whether you are aware of the effect which it is having upon you or not, you develop in the knowledge and love of God" (p. 23). God does far more for us in prayer than we do for him. We must pray with humility and an interior spirit; "words just for the sake of words are not going to please God" (p. 35). In the Our Father Jesus taught us *how* to pray; he didn't give us a series of set phrases to rattle off at God, but rather how we are to go about it. He asks us to be honest about making petitions: "You are dealing with grace and love, not with magic" (p. 82). The last chapter on "The Fruitful Prayer" speaks of the fruits in the prayerful man; he rightly stresses a calm trust in God and charity towards others.

"Love is bound to break into prayer" (p. 29), and this book can help. Because it is so good, one wishes it were priced for mass distribution. This little book has only 59 small pages of actual text, wide margins, large type. In pamphlet form it should be in school, college

and parish racks. Even now the convent library copy should be passed frantically from hand to hand. Then all should pray that it will soon be out in an inexpensive booklet to be reflected on at leisure and to inspire all affectionate children who would go to an affectionate Father—to inspire prayer, in other words.

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IN THE REDEEMING CHRIST. By F. X. Durrwell, C.Ss.R. Translated by Rosemary Sheed. Sheed & Ward, New York, 1963. Pp. xi, 292. Cloth, $5.00.

Father Durrwell's earlier, acclaimed work, *The Resurrection,* explained the doctrine of redemption in Scripture as a truth to be understood; here he returns to the same mystery, explored as a way of life. From his introductory statement — "The one ambition this book has is that of *never* seeing the Christian life except in relation to Christ the redeemer who is its center" — follow the book's eighteen variations on this basic theme.

The Scriptures reveal Christ's salvation essentially as a dying and a rising. The law of Christ's life must be that of the Christian's: total submission which is an acceptance of God's will. This pattern is invariable; each man works out his salvation by accepting what is revealed in Christ. Christian faith begins with openness to God; the sacraments of the Eucharist and penance reaffirm that faith; Christian virtues — humility, obedience, virginity, piety—testify to the Christian's acceptance of God's plan for his salvation.

To be a Christian, then, is to know God's plan as revealed in Christ. Father Durrwell looks to the New Testament, particularly to Saint John and Saint Paul, for a guide to knowing the Lord who was both Servant and Son of God. Here also he finds the Church in God's plan, and Mary, who manifests the whole history of the Church's sanctification in her brief life.

The importance of his theme, the clarity of his insight, and the authority of the writer are recommendation enough for this book which deserves not only reading but meditation.

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MARY, MOTHER OF THE LORD. By Karl Rahner. Translated by W. J. O'Hara. Herder and Herder, New York, 1963. Pp. 107. Cloth, $2.95.

Too often sermons preached at May devotions are little more than spiritual nosegays. Not so, however, when a theologian of Karl Rahner's stature delivers them.

Mary, Mother of the Lord presents a series of eight conferences delivered by the author during May at the University Church of the Holy Spirit in Innsbruck. They are so clear an adolescent can understand; so penetrating the serious adult will find much to think upon.

Father Rahner's fundamental thesis is simply that we human beings are important to each other, important even to God in his plan for our salvation. And what is true

of all of us is especially true of our Lady.

In each of his sermons, the author considers one of our Lady's prerogatives and what it means for us. In her divine maternity, Mary completely accepted Christ. We, too, must accept him and become what in fact we are: Christians. Her immaculate conception shows us that our beginnings, too, have their origins in God's mercy. Her perpetual virginity is a model for the true Christian's enduring self-abandonment, and her sinlessness is proof of the power of the grace that we too possess. Finally, her assumption into heaven is assurance that we also will be glorified.

The author's humility has made him preface his own reflections with a chapter summarizing the teaching of the Church about Mary. This reviewer feels that such material might have been better relegated to an appendix, for its too-factual presentation might deter some readers from going on to discover that "if there is light anywhere, there is light for us." If we would but become what in fact we are, we should see that what is true of our Lady is in a relative but real way likewise true of us.

Sister Mary Catherine, O.S.U.
Ursuline Academy
Cumberland, Maryland

THE DISCERNMENT OF VOCATIONS. By Raymond Hostie, S.J. Translated by Michael Barry. Sheed and Ward, New York, 1963. Pp. 160. Cloth, $3.50.

Over the past few years we have reviewed a number of books for *Sponsa Regis* and have frankly classified the works as excellent, good, or fair. Fortunately, none of them rated a poor report. With that as background and from our own personal experience in vocation work both as an assistant pastor and as diocesan vocation director we would like to recommend highly *The Discernment of Vocations* for every priest, brother, and sister. We would encourage in a special manner its careful reading by those who deal frequently with teen-agers or others where the vocational decision is more imminent.

As noted on the jacket, a vocation to the priesthood or the religious life is a personal call from God, it is true, but certain aptitudes, both in the natural and supernatural spheres, are essential. This little volume clearly and concisely describes these elements and offers principles to guide us in recognizing them. The author, both a priest and psychologist with many years of actual experience in the field, treats numerous matters, including a fairly extensive coverage of psychological testing and treatment.

The translation by Michael Barry comes off quite well, resulting in a very readable style. However, the nature of the subject and its succinct handling would justify several re-readings.

Father Hostie says, "Anyone who has consecrated himself to God in a form of life, be it monastic, apostolic or secular, owes it to himself on account of his very state of life, to know the principles which govern the discernment of vocations and understand how they apply to him-

self... This knowledge will allow him to give entirely objective answers to the questions of those who, impressed by his example, feel the urge to model themselves on him or even to follow him." This book will supply that information to its reader.

Reverend Joseph M. Champlin
Immaculate Conception Cathedral
Syracuse, New York

SPIRITUAL DOCTRINE OF ST. AUGUSTINE. By Ignatius M. Barrachina, O.C.D. Translated by Edward James Schuster. B. Herder Book Company, St. Louis, 1963. Pp. xvi, 264. Cloth, $4.75.

Of the three sources of assault on the Christian soul — the world, the flesh, and the devil — the first has probably been least considered among spiritual writers, according to His Excellency Jose Lopez Ortiz, Bishop of Tuy, in his prologue to this book. In studying the world Father Ignatius has pored over the writings of Saint Augustine; he shows how profoundly the Saint was inspired by the Gospel of Saint John.

In the first part of the book, Father Ignatius, quoting or paraphrasing Saint Augustine in a delightful manner, discusses the world which did not know Christ: its characteristics, its father, the problems of the world, the "hour of darkness," and what God thinks of the world. In the second part, he discusses Saint Augustine's thought on Christian emancipation, Christian victory, Christian separation from the world. This is the area of Christian hope, for all of these spring from the essential choice of the Christian by Christ: "I have chosen you out of the world."

Father Ignatius thinks that his theme is eminently relevant to the contemporary world because, he says, what is put forth today as a challenge against Christianity is its conception of man. What is denied of the Church today, he continues, is her humanism. This is not a complete treatise on the Church, but it is directed toward those who would leave the City of Man and find the City of God.

The relevance of Saint Augustine's thought to the modern situation is once again abundantly illustrated in this admirable work. The translation does justice to the profound thought yet simple style of the original.

Sister Maria Assunta, C.S.C.
Saint Mary's College
Notre Dame, Indiana

THE PRAYER OF FAITH. By Leonard Boase, S.J. B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, 1962. Pp. ix, 147. Cloth, $3.25.

Father Boase succeeds admirably in encouraging the prayer-life of those who seek perfection. We would not hesitate to recommend this book for religious, novices, and postulants, as well as for the laity in earnest search of spiritual guidance in prayer. The aim of prayer is clearly stated; the various helps in prayer are generously given; the different types of prayer are explained. In this respect, the classic terminology is used, along with readily understandable explications that remove the mystery from the common appellations of "the prayer of simple

regard," and "the night of the senses." In the words of the author, "the history of a life of prayer is the emergence into consciousness of secret forces rising from the innermost recesses of the soul." The reader becomes increasingly aware of the pattern that God usually follows in the molding of a soul of prayer, and feels closer to fellow members of the Mystical Body in the molding process.

Due emphasis is placed on the benefit of vocal prayer. In the chapter bearing that title, the reader will glean a greater appreciation of the power of the rosary in helping one to remain in the presence of God. Twenty-one short chapters treat summarily, but practically, of the various types of prayer; the prayer of faith receives fuller development. Though the subject is deep the style is never ponderous. This book renders a valuable service to the reader, lay or religious, desirous of a greater commitment in prayer, greater union with God.

Mother Mary Loretta, R.J.M.
Regina High School
Hyattsville, Maryland

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF VIRGINITY. By Lucien Legrand. Sheed and Ward, New York, 1963. Pp. vii, 167. Cloth, $3.50.

Here we have a work that can rightfully take its place with an increasing number of works reflecting a new and vibrant spirit in the Church today. This is a spirit of "new life" flowing from a truer understanding of the mystery of Christ and the life that he gives to those who "receive his words."

The Biblical Doctrine of Virginity is not light reading. It proposes for the serious reader a study of the inspired word of God as it reveals the doctrine of virginity. One is grateful to the author for unlocking scriptural subtleties that would have been closed to the uninitiated student of Sacred Scripture. One is doubly grateful to that same scholar for a clear statement of the case for virginity in its positive, Christian richness. As the author states, "Virginity is agape: it has all the intensity of love; it is not primarily disengagement and withdrawal. It is unqualified dedication to the 'one husband,' Christ."

The scope of the book includes both the Old and the New Testament witness to virginity. When discussing Jeremias, the Old Testament personification of celibacy, Legrand sees this virginity as a negative thing, a forlorn celibacy. The symbolic life of Jeremias was a prophecy of the imminent doom of the Israelite world.

In contrast to this, virginity in Christ is seen in a positive light. The Christian virgin is a symbol, and a prophecy too. She speaks by her total love gift of a new world heralded by the death and resurrection of her Lord. She is a sign *now* of that kingdom that will be fully realized only in the time to come. "The marriage feast of the Parousia is anticipated in her life."

Legrand concludes this excellent study with a treatment of virginity in relation to liberty, charity, and fecundity.

Sister Agnes Patrice, C.S.J.
Fontbonne College
Saint Louis, Missouri

ANNOUNCEMENTS

INSTITUTE ON PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGY for religious superiors, on the topic "Maturity of the Feminine Religious." July 15-29. For further information write: Sister M. Richard, IHM, Chairman, Graduate Department of Religious Education, Immaculate Heart College, 2021 N. Western Avenue, Los Angeles 27, California.

MASTER IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION. Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, in cooperation with the Sister Formation Conference, offers a new three-year program for those responsible for the training of young nuns. June 15-July 24. Write: Chairman M.R.E. Committee, Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, Purchase, New York.

FOOD SERVICE WORKSHOP especially designed for Sisters and Brothers preparing food in Catholic institutions throughout the United States and Canada. August 2-12. Write: Brother Herman E. Zaccarelli, C.S.C., Director, Catholic Food Service Workshop, Stonehill College, North Easton, Massachusetts.

INSTITUTE ON RELIGIOUS AND SACERDOTAL VOCATIONS. Fordham University hosts the fourteenth annual institute, July 8-9. The Vocation Institute will also sponsor two workshops: WORKSHOP FOR MISTRESSES OF NOVICES, POSTULANTS, AND JUNIOR PROFESSED on topics related to the development of the younger religious, July 13-17. WORKSHOP FOR LOCAL SUPERIORS will treat "Streams of Renewal Within the Church," and "Dynamics of Religious Governance," July 20-24. For further information write: Reverend John F. Gilson, S.J., Vocation Institute, Fordham University, New York 7, N.Y.

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